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## Curricular and Socio-Pedagogical Aspects Regarding the Employment of Graduates (philological profile) in Pre- University Education

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### Abstract

In the first part of this paper it is drawn up the theoretical basis through the concepts of education, training and curriculum. Significant points of view on curriculum operationalization elaborated by Dan Potolea, Ion Negreț Dobridor, Lucian Ciolan, Liliana Ezechil and others are being looked over.

The second part of the study includes the assumption that by means of minimal curricular changes a genuine reform could be accomplished in the field of foreign language knowledge acquired by the youth.

The statistical analysis of the data obtained by virtue of a questionnaire and an interview confirms the hypothesis, thus suggesting the necessity of applying minimal curricular changes with a view to extending the teaching of foreign languages.

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**Keywords:** curriculum; multidimensional approach; curricular procesuality; education; labor market.

### 1. Theoretical Grounds

Educational sciences specialists as well as numerous political leaders are aware of the importance education has by claiming that one of the priorities of the contemporary Romanian society is the development and modernization of education. Within this context, it is estimated that Romania’s future depends on the quality of education, pointing out the close links which exist between education, culture and the quality of life as well as the numerous connections

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between education and economy. One of the theoretical and practical issues of educational sciences is represented by the complex mechanisms by means of which education and especially the University influences significantly the fundamental institutions of socio- cultural development.

Educational sciences in Romania have registered considerable progress in the last decades; instead of the old general pedagogy with its theoretical and conservative leanings new educational sciences have emerged. Such sciences have evolved rapidly and among them a fundamental subject in teacher training, namely that of curriculum methodology has been asserting itself in a particular way. Even the mere introduction and use on a large scale of the term ‘curriculum’ has brought about more coherence to Romanian pedagogy together with higher chances of adapting itself to western professional terminology. As it is known, the term ‘curriculum’ corresponds to a great extent to the concept of educational content in traditional pedagogy. We are interested below in a relative and more practical sense, thus we will understand that curriculum stands for the framework plane of education, the subjects which are taught in pre-university education and their quality (mandatory, optional or facultative), including the number of hours envisaged to each of them.

In order to structure more concretely the theoretical aspects on which our research is based we are going to present briefly in the following lines some of the notable contributions to curriculum derived from the works of Dan Potolea, Ion Negreț Dobridor, Lucian Ciolan, Liliana Ezechil, Rodica Niculescu and Virgil Frunză. In studies such as “The Curriculum Conceptualization” (2002) or “The Theory and Methodology of Curriculum” (2008), Dan Potolea and Ion Negreț Dobridor have brought to the fore of professional literature in our country the issue of curriculum conceptualization and operationalization. Simultaneously with the analytical effort sustained to identify the senses of the concept. Its connections with other fundamental concepts there are being carried on perspectives and tendencies of a comprehensive approach. The multivariate approach employed in relation to curriculum implies three levels of analysis: “the structural plan, the procedural plan, and the product plan.” (Dan Potolea, 2002, page 78) Another way of analyzing curriculum is that of emphasizing socio-historical aspects. After considering various assumptions regarding curriculum development and thoroughly analyzing its modern optimization and operationalization, Ion Negreț Dobridor takes into account certain contemporary particularities stating that “postmodern curricular thinking has colonized, in a short time, disregarded branches, forgotten branches or branches which were considered to be taboo to modern pedagogical thinking.” (Ion Negreț Dobridor, 2008, page 293)

While trying to synthesize and operationalize the main issues of curriculum we are going to examine below some socio-pedagogical and curricular aspects which result from the concrete study of the relation existing between the University of Oradea, specialization philology and the pre-university education in Bihor County.

It is well known that in the last two decades around 3-4 million of Romanian people have gone abroad to look for a job. It is important to notice that most of them have preferred to immigrate into Italy and Spain where earnings are low and the economic downturn perpetuates rather than settling into Germany, the UK and the Nordic countries in general, where earnings are much higher and the perspectives regarding development are more encouraging. In our opinion the explanation of this paradox rests upon the fact that the Romanian migrants do not know English, French and German very well, thus preferring the southern countries which have languages similar to the Romanian language. We reckon that this wrong direction of the migrants is due to the fact that in the Romanian school languages such as English, German and French have not been studied long enough. It has been ascertained that the Romanian school, the curriculum, the current educational framework plane are not adapted enough to the quick changes which have appeared in the work force migration, having in mind Romania’s membership in the European Union and the speeding up of this process (Romania’s joining the Schengen area). Linguistic drawbacks are to be seen in the case of various experts from the European countries or from transoceanic countries who come to our country to set up a business or to work. A similar issue is represented by the fact that in Romania arrive migrants from the Arabic countries with whom one can communicate properly only in English and French.

As it is known in the procedural plan of the curriculum, Dan Potolea distinguishes three sets of activities (see fig. 1): projection, implementation and evaluation “through which intentions are being united with action and action with evaluation. These three processes in their turn, can be situated within three perspectives of analysis: as a research object, as a theoretical product and as actual practice.” (Potolea Dan, 2002, page 81)

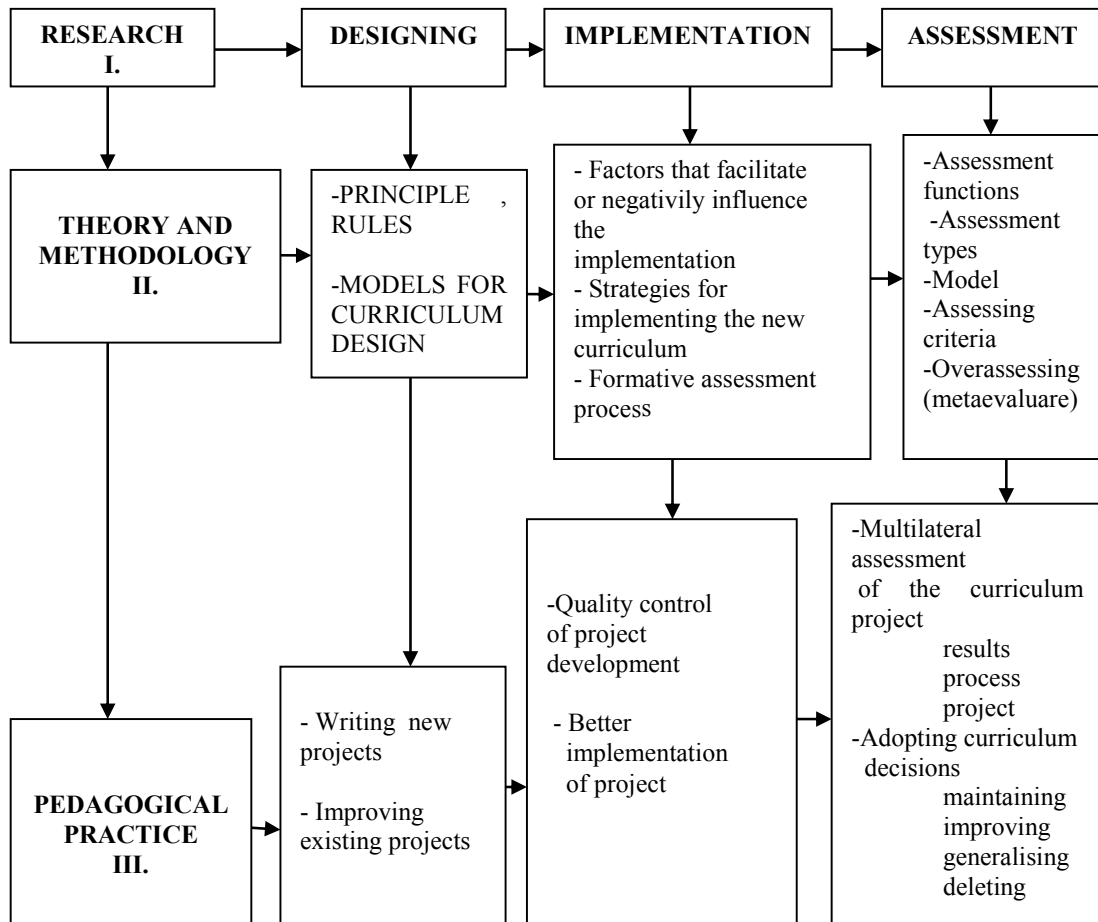


Fig. 1 Curriculum process viewed in relation with three approaching perspectives (Potolea Dan, 2002, page 81)

Curricular processuality in the sense of operationalization can be studied as interaction (the connections projection – teaching – learning- assessment), that is in the narrow field of didactics, the same way Liliana Ezechil, Rodica Niculescu and Virgil Frunză (2008).

Another curricular innovation has been suggested by Lucian Ciolan by means of elaborating the concept of integrated learning, that is, the ambition to pass beyond the subject matter taught towards a holistic approach of the cultural and socio-educational reality (Ciolan Lucian, 2008, page 72).

We are going to try to take into consideration in a broader plan the direct and immediate relation (The Faculty of Letters and the world of working places on one hand, and the Bihor County Board of Education, as an employment agent in pre-university education) on the other hand.

## 2. Methodology

The main hypothesis of our research is that if slight changes were made in the case of framework plane in pre-university and pre-school education, then noticeable improvements would be achieved in the knowledge of foreign languages by Romanian young people who would have higher chances to be employed more advantageously in the European labour market and in the social, political and cultural life of the European Union.

In accordance with the hypothesis mentioned above, the aim of our study is that of operationalizing and assessing the extent to which the Faculty of Letters contributes and is able to contribute to a greater extent to the

improvement of foreign language knowledge acquired by the youth.

In order to reach the goal set we have previously made a distinction between two variables: the first one refers to the number of students from the Faculty of Letters which is part of the University of Oradea (131 graduates) and the second variable refers to the number of graduates that have been employed in pre-university education, in Bihor county in the summer of 2014.

Depending on the hypothesis and goal presented earlier, the quantized objective of our research is the statistical analysis of the two variables, on one hand the students who prefer the pre-university education and the number of graduates who are actually in employment.

To reach the goal of our investigation and to test the hypothesis we have used a proper research methodology. The students' choices have been diagnosed by means of a questionnaire which includes 13 items, some of which were referring strictly to factual data ( age, sex, marital status), however most of the items reflected the students' opinions regarding the training of the future teachers, where and how it should be provided, and what they feel about being part of the teaching staff. The background questions of this questionnaire, the interviewees' intention to become teachers (question 7), in which sector, field of activity they want to be hired (question 12) and where they would like to be employed: state education or private education (question 13).

Another method employed was that of organizing a focus group, which was attended by educational sciences experts, teachers from the Faculty of Letters, experts from the Bihor County Board of Education, representatives of the local community, students.

Concrete data regarding the number of graduates employed in pre-university education have been collected on the basis of an interview with representatives of the Bihor County Board of Education which took place after the completion of the teaching staff distribution process in the county's pre-university education.

### 3. Results and comments

Further we are going to present the statistical analysis of the students' answers insisting on the answers to the background questions. As it can be seen in figures 2- 5 the

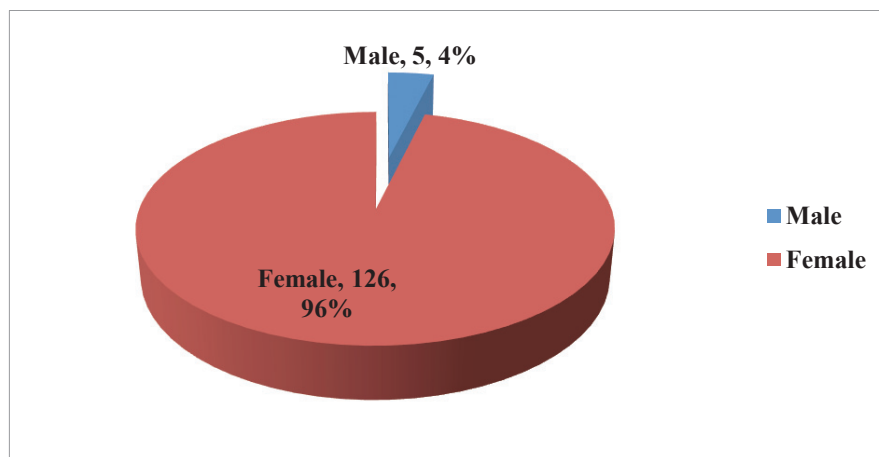


Fig. 2 Male/female participants

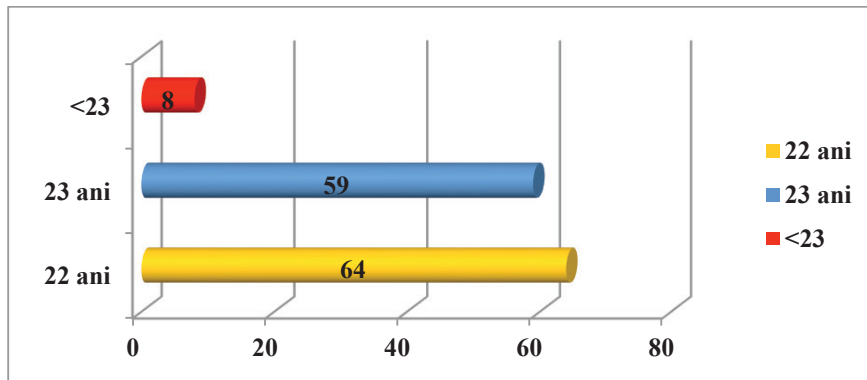


Fig. 3 Age of participants

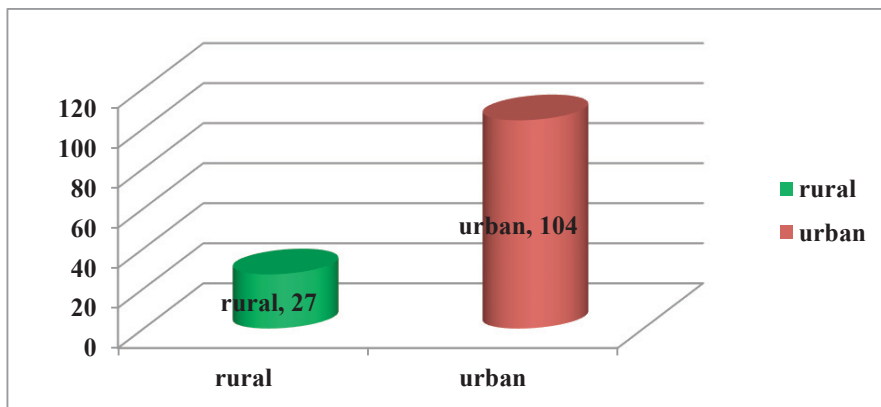


Fig. 4 Area of origin

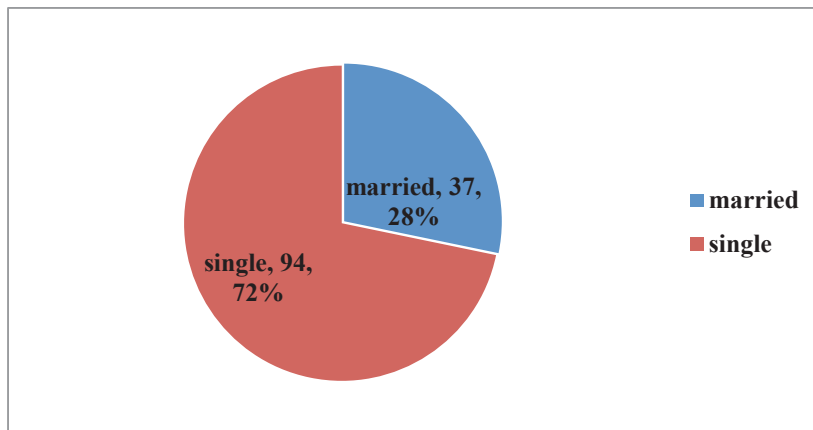


Fig. 5 Civil status

sample comprises 131 subjects (graduates with a Bachelor of Arts degree examination from the Faculty of Letters), of whom 96.2 % are females and we have also noticed that most of them are about 22 or 23 years old; only 9% of them being more than 23 years old.

We have also found out that most of the students came from urban areas (68.3%) only 39.6% coming from rural areas (figure 3). As far as the marital status is concerned one can notice that most of them 73.7% were not married,

and that only (41) 31.3% of them were married. Question 6 regarded the gathering of subjects' opinions on the teaching career. Through this question we aimed at observing the fundamental attitude of the graduates from the Faculty of Letters in relation to the status of the teaching profession. We were pleased by the fact that most of them 82 (62.5%) have a very good opinion and that 46 of them (31%) have a good opinion (see figure 6).

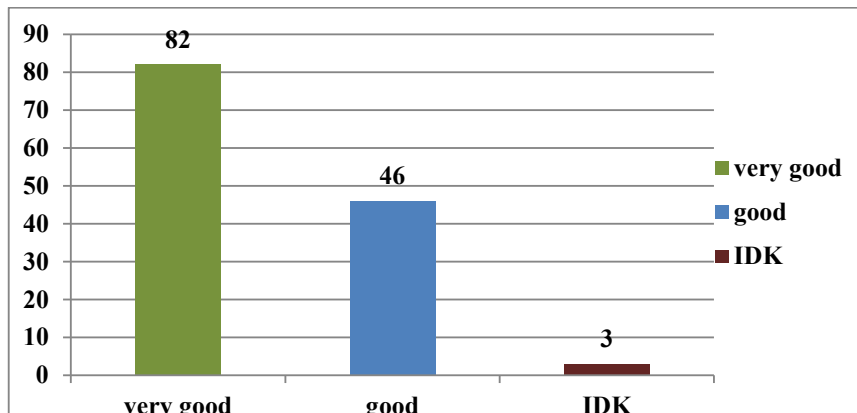


Fig. 6 Opinion about teaching career

None of them has a bad opinion about being a teacher, although it is likely that some of those who answered “I don't know” may in fact reveal a negative attitude.

Question 7 (‘Do you intend to become a teacher?’) aimed at obtaining an answer in relation to the interviewees' final decision after graduating from faculty and getting their Bachelor of Arts degree, a situation that would imply an immediate and resolute decision.

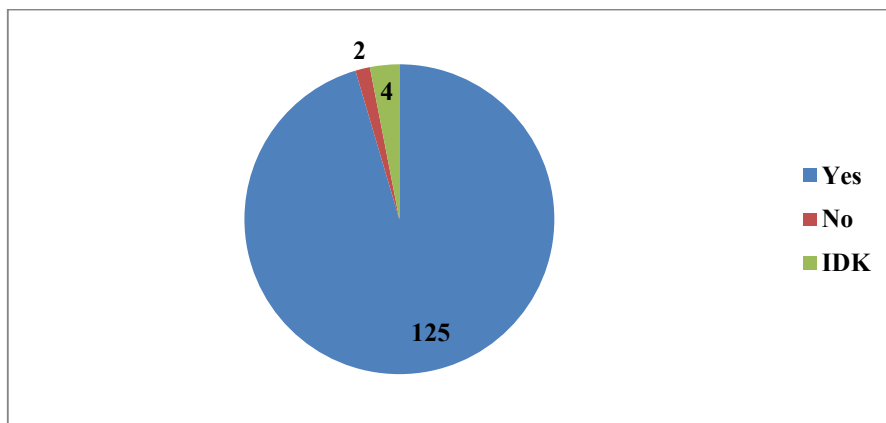


Fig. 7 Wish to become a teacher

We were impressed by the fact that to this direct question most of the subjects 95.4% (125 out of 131) explicitly stated their determination to try to get a position in education. Only two of the subjects indicated another direction, and four answers were indecisive (‘I don't know’).

We believe that the most important question in the questionnaire is question number 12 ‘In what sector, branch would you prefer to be employed after graduating from faculty?’. Although we have anticipated their preference for pre-university education, we have deliberately placed the first alternative answers which indicated the graduates' possibility to get hired in cultural or scientific institutions while the alternative of higher education was put before that of pre-university education. This methodological manipulation has not influenced too much the tendency of the graduates' opinions. As it results from figure 8 only 2.3 % of the interviewees prefer to be employed in cultural

institutions and the same percentage want to have a job in mass-media. Higher education is preferred by 6.9% of the interviewees, which represents less than the perspective of being translators in trading companies. The greatest part of the interviewees prefers to work in pre-university education or they realize that the best jobs are to be found in a school. We have examined the answers of those who want to be distributed in pre-university education, according to their residence, marital status and we have observed that 47 graduates out of 102 come from rural areas and 55 of them come from urban areas. Apparently the preference for teaching in the educational system of the interviewees coming from urban areas is higher than that of those coming from rural areas if we take into account the fact that the great majority of the interviewees who come from rural areas, 47 out of 52 (90%) prefers education; whereas only 55 out of 79 (69, 62 %), it results that the adherence to education is much more intense in the case of the interviewees coming from rural areas.

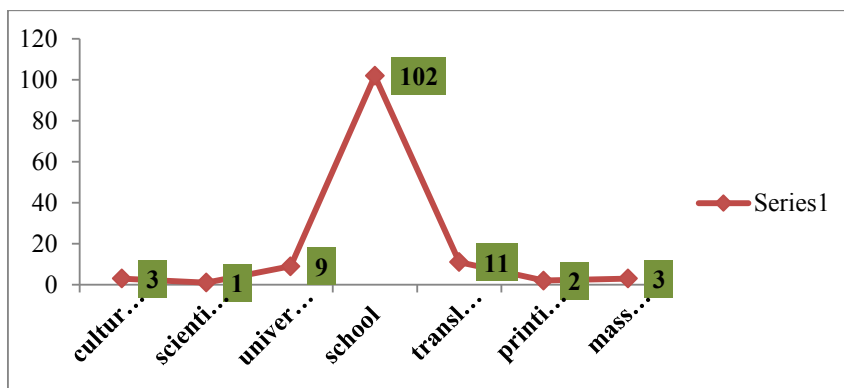


Fig. 8 Options regarding hiring after graduation

Similar findings derive from relating the preference for education to their marital status. In this situation as well we have noticed that the share of those in favour of a career in education is higher in the case of those who are married (38 out of 41) 92.68%, than in the case of those who are not married, 56 out of 94 (59.57%).

#### 4. Operational Design

The main assumption of our research has been examined by comparing the interviewees' answers to the background question, with their preferences for education on one hand and the observations made by the Bihor County Board of Education regarding the number of philology teachers employed in education in 2014, after the distribution has been completed on the other hand. Synthetically this proportion is of  $77.9\% / 12.21\% = 6.38\%$ , in other words, the opportunity of the interviewees who would rather be employed in education is rather modest, of only 15%. It is true that we should take into account the possibility of the graduates from the Faculty of Letters from the University of Oradea to be employed in other counties; although this chance cannot be that high, since in other counties the graduates would have to compete with graduates coming from other faculties of letters.

#### 5. Conclusion

The main conclusion emerged from our investigation is that pre-university education offers few chances to work in education to the graduates from the Faculty of Letters. In other words, we have identified a certain disparity in the number of graduates, their preferences for pre-university education and the real employment opportunities. How could this disparity be defused?

In our opinion it would be most efficiently to introduce a slight change (an extra optional class for the curricular

area of Language and Communication without altering the maximum number of hours per week). If everything were acted in this manner, given the fact that the school management would react promptly, on one hand there would be created more positions/jobs and, on the other hand the facilities available to the students would be multiplied in case they had access to the knowledge of foreign languages, thus enabling a better integration of the future generations in the international area.

An adjacent conclusion is that according to which it would be desirable that foreign language teaching to begin in the preparatory class and too include gradually a bigger number of hours per week. At the same time it would be beneficial to extend the institutions that train adults and seniors and where mainly foreign languages would be taught.

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